

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LAGOS 08688 150530Z
ACTION AF-10

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PDEV, NI, SHUM
SUBJECT: A POLITICAL POTPOURRI

1. THE NIGERIAN PRESS IS CURRENTLY HAVING A FIELD DAY ON POLITICAL REPORTING WITH A HOST OF INTERESTING, CONFLICTING, AND NO DOUBT SOMEWHAT INACCURATE ACCOUNTS OF POLITICAL MEETINGS AND MANEUVERING ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

2. A CENTERPIECE FOR SPECULATION HAS BEEN THE BUILDUP TO THE JULY 13 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS IN ABEOKUTA. THE ABEOKUTA LGC WHICH WAS DISSOLVED FOR CORRUPTION IS TO HAVE ITS ENTIRE 22 SEAT MEMBERSHIP RECONSTITUTED IN THE SPECIAL ELECTION WHICH, ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, HAS BECOME A TEST OF STRENGTH FOR THE VARIOUS COMPETING POLITICAL PARTIES IN YORUBALAND. ACCORDING TO THE JULY 12 DAILY SKETCH, ABEOKUTA WILL BE "A KEY TEST" OF CHIEF AWOLOWO'S POPULARITY IN THE WEST. CHIEF ABIOLA, PERHAPS IN LEAGUE WITH THE SHEHU SHAGARI GROUP, AND CHIEF COD R, PROBABLY

IN WITH CLUB 19, ARE "IN A STRONG LEAGUE" TO THWART AWO'S OPES. A THIRD FORCE COMPLICATING MATTERS IS LED BY CHIEF AILERU, THE DEPOSED CHAIRMAN OF THE LGC. JULY 12 DAILY TIMES ASSURES US VIA "AN OBSERVER" THAT FOR THE EGBA PEOPLE IN 1979, ABEOKUTA
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PAGE 02 LAGOS 08688 150530Z

"IS A DECIDER."

3. SIMILARLY, PRESS ACCOUNTS INDICATE THAT MANEUVERING FOR POLITICAL PARTY COALITIONS IS PROCEEDING APACE ACROSS MUCH OF THE SOUTH. JULY 13 NIGERIAN OBSERVER TELLS US THAT A "POLITICAL FEVER GRIPS OYO STATE" WITH POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS IN "A TOWN TO TOWN" TOUR OF THE STATE. JULY 13 NIGERIAN TRIBUNE TELLS US

THAT A NEW POLITICAL PARTY HAS BEEN FORMED IN ILORIN, "THE KWARA STATE YOUTHS MOVEMENT." ELSEWHERE, WE FIND A "SOLIDARITY LEAGUE" IN ONDO STATE WHILE THE RDH RTS#FROM BENIN CITY ARE CONFUSED EVEN BY NIGERIAN PRESS STANDARDS.

4. WITH THE BAN ON POLITICS FORMALLY IN EFFECT, THE POLITICAL MEETINGS HAVE ASSUMED VARIOUS INTERESTING FORMS OF THIN

CAMOUFLAGE. IN CROSS RIVER A "LUNCHEON" FOR "FRIENDS" OF MCA DONALD ETIEBET WAS HELD BY FELLOW MCA JOSEPH WAYAS WHILE IN RIVERS STATE A NUMBER OF FORMER POLITICIANS, MCAS, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCILLORS, (WITH A CURIOUSLY CLUB 19 HUE) GOT TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE CHIEF S.A.J. NWACHUKWA'S 50TH BIRTHDAY. BUT THE MOST IMAGINATIVE RUSE SO FAR WAS THE ANAMBRA UNITY CLUB IN ENUGU WHICH, ACCORDING TO THE NIGERIAN TRIBUNE, MET "UNDER THE GUISE OF AN EVANGELICAL MEETING." TRIBUNE TELLS US:

"(THEY) GOT THEMSELVES IN FIVE BUSES SINGING CHURCH SONGS AND HEADED FOR OBODONIKE PRIMARY SCHOOL - OUTSKIRT OF THE CAPITAL CITY. AS THEY LANDED AT THE SCHOOL THE GROUP BROKE INTO TWO. ONE GROUP WAS SEEN SINGING RELIGIOUS SONGS AT THE TOP OF THEIR VOICES, WHILE THE OTHER GROUP AT THE BACKGROUND ENGAGED IN TOP LEVEL TALKS THAT GAVE BIRTH TO THE UNITY CLUB."

5. COMMENT: WE DO NOT PRETEND TO UNDERSTAND WHAT ALL OF THIS MEANS; HOEVER, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE BAN ON POLITICS IS RAPIDLY BEING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 LAGOS 08688 150530Z

OVERTAKEN BY EVENTS, AT LEAST IN THE SOUTH. IN THE NORTH, MORE TRADITIONAL AND QUIETER TECHNIQUES ARE APPARENTLY FAVORED. AT THE LEAST, THE SOUTHERN ACTIVITIES ARE HIGHLY FLUID AND SEEM TO REFLECT OYO MCA OLADUNNI AYANDIPO'S RECENT REMARK TO US THAT GROUPS WHICH ARE BEING FORMED IN THE STATES ARE WAITING TO GET A FEEL FOR WHO THE NATIONAL WINNER MIGHT BE BEFORE THEY AFFILIATE IN A LARGER CONTEXT. OR, TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY, ACCORDING TO THE OBSERVER, THE OYO STATE POLITICOS ARE TRYING "TO IMPRESS IT UPON THE PEOPLE THAT ANY FRONT THAT MIGHT EMERGE SHOULD NOT BE IN OPPOSITION TO THE RULING PARTY EITHER AT STATE OR FEDERAL LEVEL." EASUM

NOTE BY OC/T: # AS RECEIVED.

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